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ABSTRACT

In this unit, students will learn to introduce themselves appropriately for a job interview; answer questions about their experience, background, personal qualities, and general suitability for the job; and take part in a simulated video interview. The lesson builds up to the actual interview slowly by proceeding step-by-step through the introduction and closing activities, practicing stating skills and personal strengths, and practicing answering and asking questions. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (KFT)

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Spring Institute for International Studies

E L T

Technical Assistance for
English Language Training Projects
1997-1998

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SCANS PLANS PORTFOLIO

Completing Interviews

by Barbara Sample, Spring Institute for International Studies

Level: Low level to Multi-level

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Performance Outcomes:
1. Students will introduce themselves appropriately for a job interview.
2. Students will answer questions about their experience, background, and personal qualities.
3. Students will perform a simulated video interview.

Communication teaching points: Introductions with simple present and simple past, answering questions

SCANS Competencies:
Interpersonal Skills: working well with people from diverse cultures
Basic Skills: speaking, listening
Thinking Skills: thinking creatively, reasoning
Personal Qualities: individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, integrity

Classroom configurations: Class, pairs or small groups

Materials: Video camera, monitor

Procedure:

Build up to the actual interview gradually by proceeding step by step through the introduction and closing activities, practice stating skills and personal strengths, and practice asking and answering questions. Each activity builds on those before as difficulty and challenge are increased.

1. Have students interview each other and then introduce their partner to the larger group.

2. Have each student introduce him/herself to the class on video. Play back the tape without much comment. This gives students a chance to observe their behavior without having to deal with embarrassing comments from teachers or students.

3. Present a good and an awful interview either as a live performance or on video. Debrief each interview, having students comment on what was good and what could be improved in each performance.

4. Elicit the phrases they should say and actions they should perform during the first part of an interview. The following script is an example of the result of a class brainstorm session:

1. *Hello, my name is* _____ _____.
(The space between the first and last name indicates a pause. We work on saying both names clearly and slowly so that an interviewer who is not familiar with the pronunciation has a chance of actually hearing the distinction between the two names and perhaps remembering at least one of them.)

[Firm hand shake.] (We exaggerate the difference between a firm handshake, a dead fish and a knuckle cruncher in role plays.)

2. *I'm here to apply for the ____ job.*
   [Eye contact.] [Sit down after the boss.]
3. *Here is my resume.*

Have students practice these three phrases, as well as the accompanying body language, over and over with trainers, in pairs, and at home until the phrases are virtually automatic.

5. Repeat the process with closing an interview. Practice the phrases:
   1. *Thank you for your time.*
      [Firm hand shake.]
   2. *I would like to have this job. I hope I will hear from you soon.*

6. Practice answering several questions such as "Tell me about yourself." "How's your English?" and "What are your strong points." Students will be able to use the sentences they have practiced to describe their skills and personal strengths. (See SCANS Plan "Identifying Skills and Personal Qualities".)

7. At this point people are ready for their first video taped interview. Ask for a volunteer. Before the video camera is started, be sure the interviewee can tell you briefly the job he/she is interviewing for and the qualifications he/she has for the job. This first interview should help build confidence, but still be a stretch for each person. After the interview, debrief the performance. Before playing back the video, ask the interviewee which parts of the interview went well and which parts could be improved. Then ask the class members for their comments. Finally, as the video is played back for everyone to see, the trainers can make additional comments that were not mentioned or reinforce points that are particularly important and relate to all participants. Continue this process with all members of the class. Subsequent interviews can be conducted in a small group while other groups of students work on other skills.

8. Prepare students for the hard questions they may be asked. Practice answering difficult questions in small groups and have them share their answers with the whole group. Continue the practice with questions strips; cut strips of paper with one question on each strip. Have a participant draw one of the strips, stand to read the question, and call on another person to answer the question. Other people in the class should ask for clarification if they can't understand, using phrases like "What does _____ mean?" "_____?" [with rising intonation] "What's another word for _____?" "Please repeat." "Please speak slowly."

9. Have students generate questions to ask in an interview. Initially have them list the topic areas they will want to know about. Then have them help you create the language to ask the question. Write the questions on the board to serve as cues or reminders for literate students.

10. Finally, practice the interview with each person a second time. Invite outside interviewers to give students practice with different accents and styles. If possible have employers do mock interviews and help debrief the activity.